

I think it is a dark, cool, moist spot under a great stone."

"You are wrong, brother," said the funny spider. "The finest place to live in all the world is this airy web in the bush."

"Now that," said the very brown toad, "is the worst answer I have had yet!" and away he went.

Soon he came to a swamp and saw a great, green frog sitting upon a stone and blinking fast.

"Ah, Cousin Frog," said the very brown toad, "it is a pleasure to meet you, for you at least look as though you had some sense. I wish you would answer a question for me."

"Surely, I shall, gladly, if it is not too hard," said the great, green frog.

"It is most simple," said the very brown toad. "I want to know which is the finest place to live in all the world."

"The finest place to live in all the world," said the great, green frog, "is the thick, slimy swamp."

"Oh, but that never would do for me!" said the very brown toad, so he went on till he came to a brook. On the surface of the water was a lively water-spider.

"Hello, Skipper!" said the very brown toad. "Do stop long enough to tell me which is the finest place to live in all the world. The yellow butterfly and the busy bumble-bee say it is the air in the garden; the good robin says it is the top of a tree; the small beetle says it is inside the fence rail; the old woodchuck says it is a deep, dry, snug hole under the ground; the slippery snail says it is a shell on his back; the funny spider says it is an airy web in a bush; and the great, green frog says it is the thick, slimy swamp; but I think it is a dark, cool, moist spot under a great stone."

"Your idea is wrong," said the lively water-spider. "The finest place to live in all the world is the smooth surface of this brook."

"Why, my dear sir," said the very brown toad, "I never could live there!" and he was just about to turn away, when he saw a shiny fish down in the water.

"Say, little fish," said he, "tell me the finest place to live in all the world."

The shiny fish rose for a breath of air.

"The finest place to live in all the world," said he, "is the bottom of the brook."

"Little you know about places!" said the very brown toad. "Why, I should die under water! Good-bye."

Away he went faster than ever, and on through the woods till he heard a loud chattering. Looking up into a tree, he spied a frisking squirrel.

"How are you, Friend Squirrel?" said he.

"Fine and grand!" said the squirrel, merrily. "What can I do for you?"

"Answer me one question," said the very brown toad.

"A dozen, if you like," said the frisking squirrel.

"One will be enough," said the very brown toad.

"Which is the finest place to live in all the world?"

"The finest place to live in all the world," said the frisking squirrel, "is high up in the trunk of a hollow tree."

"Nonsense!" said the very brown toad, and was going

on farther into the woods, but night came on, for he had forgotten how late was the time, and the stars came out and peeped down at him.

"Well, well!" said he. "I did not know how late it was, and now, I shall have to spend the night in these woods!"

He settled himself as comfortably as he could under the edge of a log, and was wishing he had not come away from his own good home, when all at once something called:

"Who? Who?"

"Me—I mean—I!" said the very brown toad. He was quite scared, but thought it wiser to answer up promptly. He looked up when he dared, and saw a big wise owl overhead in a tree.

"What are you doing here?" asked the owl.

"Please, sir," said the very brown toad, "I just came to find the finest place to live in all the world."

"So!" said the big, wise owl. "And what have you found?"

"Nothing at all," replied the very brown toad. "The yellow butterfly and the busy bumble-bee say it is the air in the garden; the good robin says it is the top of a tree; the large, green grasshopper and the fat, brown cricket say it is the sunny lawn; the small beetle says it is inside the fence rail; the old woodchuck says it is a deep, dry, snug hole under the ground; the slippery snail says it is a shell on his back; the funny spider says it is an airy web in a bush; the great, green frog says it is the thick, slimy swamp; the lively water-spider says it is the smooth surface of the brook; the shiny fish says it is the bottom of the brook; and the frisking squirrel says it is high up in the trunk of a hollow tree; but I think it is a dark, cool, moist spot under a great stone."

"You are right," said the big, wise owl.

"There, I knew it!" said the very brown toad. "I shall go back as soon as it is daylight."

He fell asleep, and the big, wise owl flew off, laughing as only big, wise owls can laugh, and calling, "Who? Who?"

In the morning, the very brown toad started for home promptly at half-past four o'clock.

As he passed the frisking squirrel, the shiny fish, the lively water-spider, the great, green frog, the funny spider, the slippery snail, the old woodchuck, the small beetle, the fat, brown cricket, the large, green grasshopper, the good robin, the busy bumble-bee and the yellow butterfly, he called out:

"I am right; the big, wise owl said so!"

He crawled back under the great stone, into the dark, cool, moist spot, and gave a sigh of happiness.

As for the yellow butterfly, the busy bumble-bee, the good robin, the large, green grasshopper, the fat, brown cricket, the small beetle, the old woodchuck, the slippery snail, the funny spider, the great, green frog, the lively water-spider, the shiny fish and the frisking squirrel!—why, they are laughing yet, for aught I know, for each one knows that his own place is the best in all the world!—The Churchman.